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**U.S. and Canada Agree to Assist Poor Countries Access to Medicine**

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – At the annual North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Commission meeting, the United States today announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Canada has been agreed to which ensures that NAFTA will not impede their efforts to assist poor countries from importing generic versions of patented drugs from Canada in response to health crises like HIV-AIDS.

The MOU is an example of how the United States is working within trade agreements such as NAFTA and multilaterally through the World Trade Organization (WTO) to protect intellectual property rights in ways that do not limit the flexibility of poor countries to have access to medicines in their fight against HIV-AIDS and other epidemics.

“I’m pleased that we’ve reached agreement to clarify that NAFTA's provisions will not stand in the way of Canada's implementation of its new law on pharmaceuticals. U.S. free trade agreements are in accord with the decisions on access to medicines for poor countries in the WTO in August 2003 and at the 2001 Doha Ministerial meetings,” said Zoellick. “As this announcement shows, the United States has worked to ensure that the implementation of the NAFTA stays abreast of modern developments in the area of HIV-AIDS and access to medicines.”

The United States urges Mexico to join in the MOU, which takes effect immediately.

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